Divine Word International Journal of Management and Humanities 4(3)(2025) 2109-2126

Research in Management and Humanities

DWIJMH VOL. 4 NO. 3 (2025) ISSN: 2980-4817

Available online at www.dwijmh.org
Journal homepage: http://www.dwijmh.org
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6884-3504

The impact of school heads' instructional leadership on teaching and learning outcomes: Philippine's context

Jonalyn C. Ulit: Student, Graduate School of Education, Divine Word College of Laoag, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte.

A R T I C L E I N F O

Article history:
Received : June 10, 2025
Received in rev. form. July 30, 2025
Accepted: August 15, 2025
Published: September 10, 2025

Keywords: ***School heads, instructional leadership, teaching and learning outcomes, role of school heads, teaching performance***

JEL Classification: I21

A B S T R A C T

This study explored the impact of school heads' instructional leadership on teaching quality and student learning outcomes in the Schools Division of the City of Batac. The role of school heads has expanded beyond administrative functions to include active engagement in instructional leadership, setting clear academic goals, supervising instruction, and supporting teacher development. Guided by the frameworks of the Department of Education's Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) and recent curricular reforms, this research examined how leadership practices influence classroom strategies and learner achievement. Using a descriptive research design, data were gathered from school heads and teachers to assess the extent of leadership practices and their perceived effects on instructional delivery.

Findings revealed that effective instructional leadership, characterized by clear vision, consistent monitoring, and responsive professional support affect teaching performance and engagement. However, disparities in classroom outcomes indicated that leadership impact varies depending on the consistency of implementation and contextual factors unique to each school. The results underscored the need for targeted capacity-building programs, strengthened policy support, and context-sensitive interventions to bridge gaps between policy intent and classroom practice. Insights from this study may serve as a basis for enhancing instructional leadership frameworks in similar educational settings across the Philippines.

© 2025 by the authors. Licensee DWIJMH. This open-access article is distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

Introduction

The success of educational institutions, particularly at the elementary level, is widely recognized as being closely linked to the quality and effectiveness of school leadership. In the Philippine context, the role of school heads has evolved beyond administrative management to encompass instructional leadership, a shift that aligns with global trends emphasizing the importance of leadership in shaping teaching and learning outcomes (Hallinger, 2018; Santos, 2019). School heads are now expected to provide direction, support, and guidance to teachers, fostering an environment that promotes continuous professional growth and improved student achievement (Garcia & Cruz, 2020).

* *Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6884-3504*
© 2025 by the authors. Hosting by DWIJMH. Peer review under responsibility of Divine Word International Journal of Management and Humanities.

Instructional leadership encompasses a range of key responsibilities, including setting clear academic goals, overseeing the curriculum, monitoring teaching practices, and fostering a culture of teamwork and accountability. Research indicates that effective instructional leaders prioritize learning, invest in helping teachers develop their skills, and utilize data to inform their decisions (Ng, Nguyen, Wong, & Choy, 2020). In the Philippines, this kind of leadership is becoming even more important as schools face the challenges of educational reforms like the K to 12 Basic Education Program and the MATATAG Curriculum, which require school leaders to be flexible and deeply involved in instructional support (Del Rosario & Sarmiento, 2021).

Furthermore, instructional leadership helps foster a professional learning community, a place where teachers feel empowered to reflect on and improve their teaching. A study by Dela Cruz and Magsino (2022) found that when school heads actively observe classrooms, provide helpful feedback, and support ongoing teacher development, it boosts both teacher morale and student performance. In the era of remote and blended learning, school leaders have also had to adapt their styles to keep learning centered on students and ensure equal access to education (Bernardo, 2021).In short, instructional leadership remains a key force driving school improvement. As education continues to evolve, the ability of school heads to lead instructional change with vision, empathy, and data-driven decisions is vital for the sustained success of teaching and learning.

In the Schools Division of the City of Batac, the growing emphasis on basic education has placed elementary school heads at the forefront of educational reform and innovation. Their ability to influence teaching strategies and learning environments is critical, particularly as the city strives to meet national standards and respond to the diverse needs of its student population. Research indicates that effective instructional leadership characterized by clear vision, active supervision of instruction, and support for teacher development can significantly enhance both teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Lopez, 2022; Reyes & Delos Santos, 2023).

Despite the presence of established leadership frameworks and policies such as the Department of Education's Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS), notable variations in classroom instruction and student performance continue to be observed across Batac's public elementary schools (Department of Education Philippines, 2021). These disparities suggest that while policies provide a valuable foundation, their implementation and impact depend heavily on the leadership practices of individual school heads. The gap between policy intent and classroom realities points to the need for a more nuanced understanding of how instructional leadership is enacted at the school level (Dela Cruz et al., 2022).

It is within this context, this study aimed to assess the impact of school leaders' instructional leadership on teaching quality and student learning outcomes in the Schools Division of the City of Batac. Through the dynamics between school leadership, instructional practices, and learning outcomes, the research sought to provide insights that can inform targeted interventions, professional development programs, and policy refinements. Ultimately, understanding these relationships is essential for ensuring quality, equity, and relevance in basic education, not only in Batac but also as a model for similar contexts across the Philippines.

Literature review

The purpose of this related literature is to contextualize the research within the body of existing knowledge and support the necessity of this study. It offers methodological insights, a theoretical foundation, and aids in preventing repetition. It also advances comprehension, strengthens the researcher's credibility, and helps formulate hypotheses.

Instructional leadership

Recent scholarship continues to affirm the foundational role of instructional leadership in driving school improvement. Hallinger (2018) rearticulates instructional leadership as a dynamic set of practices centered on enhancing teaching and learning, emphasizing the importance of articulating a clear school vision, managing instructional programs, and fostering a supportive school climate. Gumus et al. (2018) further highlight those effective instructional leaders are adaptive and collaborative, tailoring their strategies to the evolving needs of their school communities.

Contemporary research highlights the substantial impact of instructional leadership on teaching effectiveness. Liu and Hallinger (2018) found that school leaders who engage in regular classroom observations, provide constructive feedback, and facilitate professional development create an environment conducive to teacher growth and instructional innovation. Supovitz et al. (2019) also observed that a collaborative culture established by instructional leaders empowers teachers to refine their practices, ultimately enhancing instructional quality continuously.

Effective instructional leadership is widely recognized as crucial to a school's success, particularly at the elementary level. In the Philippine context, the role of school heads has evolved from being primarily administrative managers to becoming instructional leaders who focus on teaching and learning. This shift aligns with global trends where principals are seen as key drivers of teacher growth and student achievement (Hallinger, 2011; Sun, Cheng, & Walker, 2024). The Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSH) explicitly emphasize this transformation, particularly in Domain 3, which requires school leaders to enhance teacher effectiveness and learning outcomes through classroom supervision, coaching, and mentoring (Department of Education [DepEd], 2020). Moreover, Republic Act 9155 or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 clearly defines the school head as both an administrative and instructional leader tasked with setting directions, managing resources, and ensuring curriculum implementation (Congress of the Philippines, 2001). Recent studies also affirm that school heads who actively guide and support teachers in professional development foster significant improvements in student learning, highlighting the centrality of instructional leadership to educational success (Magno, 2021; Dela Cruz, 2022).

In the Schools Division of the City of Batac, elementary school heads play a pivotal role in educational reform. Their capacity to shape teaching strategies and cultivate positive learning environments is particularly essential as Batac strives to meet national educational standards and cater to the diverse needs of its students. Research conducted in the Division of Albay shows that school heads who consistently exhibit instructional leadership behaviors, such as establishing clear goals, aligning curricula, and mentoring teachers have a measurable positive impact on teaching quality and overall

school effectiveness (Morales, 2025). Similarly, a study in Castillejos District, Zambales, found that elementary teachers tend to have higher self-efficacy in classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies when their school heads serve as visible, communicative, and resource-providing instructional leaders (Battad, 2024). These findings affirm that strong instructional leadership, defined by a clear vision, active supervision, and professional support for teachers, is instrumental in enhancing teaching performance and improving student learning outcomes.

However, despite established leadership frameworks like the Department of Education's Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS), differences in classroom instruction and student performance are still seen across public elementary schools in Batac. These inconsistencies show that while policies are a good start, their success depends on the leadership of individual school heads. The gap between policy and what happens in the classroom highlights the need to better understand how instructional leadership is implemented at the school level.

Impact on learning outcomes

Instructional leadership remains a critical factor in student achievement. Hallinger and Wang (2020) demonstrated that effective school leadership is closely linked to improved student learning outcomes, second only to the direct impact of classroom instruction. Nguyen et al. (2021) add that instructional leaders who align school goals, curricula, and teaching methods while leveraging data to inform decisions, significantly contribute to positive student performance.

Furthermore, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2017) emphasized that leadership practices focused on promoting teacher professional learning have a more substantial effect on student outcomes compared to general leadership behaviors. Similarly, Leithwood et al. (2020) found that schools with strong instructional leaders foster a culture of high expectations and accountability, which in turn boosts learner engagement and academic achievement.

Recent evidence from Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan (2018) also underscores that leadership indirectly improves learning outcomes by enhancing teacher effectiveness through support, coaching, and continuous feedback mechanisms. Moreover, the World Bank (2022) highlights that quality instructional leadership plays a vital role in addressing learning poverty, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, by ensuring that teaching practices are responsive to student needs.

In summary, learning outcomes are not solely shaped by what happens in the classroom, but are also significantly influenced by how school heads lead instructionally through goal-setting, support for teachers, use of evidence-based strategies, and the creation of a learner-centered environment.

Local studies and context

In the Philippine context, recent studies highlight the importance of instructional leadership in elevating educational outcomes. Corpuz (2020) and Malabanan (2022) found that school heads who prioritize teacher development and data-driven instructional decisions contribute to higher National Achievement Test scores. However, research by Garcia and Cruz (2020) and Dela Cruz et al. (2022) points to persistent inconsistencies in leadership training and practice, particularly in smaller school divisions such as Batac,

underscoring the need for more sustained and context-sensitive professional development for school heads.

Similarly, the study of Ramos (2019) titled *"Transformational Leadership Practices of Public Elementary School Principals and Their Effect on Teaching Effectiveness"* revealed that transformational instructional leadership directly improves teacher motivation and lesson delivery. In a comparative analysis by Santos and Velarde (2021), schools with strong instructional leadership mechanisms showed a 15–20% improvement in reading comprehension among Grades 3 to 6 learners over a three-year period. Meanwhile, Alvarado (2023) emphasized the role of collaborative leadership in enhancing school-based learning action cell (LAC) implementation, leading to improved teacher confidence and learner engagement. Lastly, Navarro and Lim (2022) highlighted that school heads who engage in regular classroom observations and feedback loops contribute to better curriculum alignment and student learning outcomes, especially in rural school contexts.

Mendoza (2021) highlighted that effective instructional leaders consistently establish clear academic goals, offer focused instructional support, and foster a culture of shared accountability, which leads to measurable improvements in both literacy and numeracy outcomes. Similarly, Villanueva and Ortega (2023) found that when school heads combine instructional supervision with professional learning communities, teachers become more proficient in implementing evidence-based strategies, helping to close learning gaps. Additionally, the Department of Education's Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) policy reinforces the role of school heads as learning leaders by emphasizing key competencies such as strategic instructional planning, teacher coaching, and the use of assessment data to guide teaching practices.

International research aligns with these findings; Leithwood et al. (2020) confirm that leadership ranks just below classroom instruction in its influence on student achievement. In the Philippine context, this highlights the crucial role of school heads in enhancing instructional quality, especially in addressing the challenges posed by learning recovery and the transition from the K to 10 to K to 12 curriculum reforms. In a mixed-method study by Del Rosario and Fabian (2023), instructional leadership was found to be a significant driver in improving remedial instruction outcomes for struggling learners. Their research across multiple elementary schools in Region I revealed that school heads who implemented structured intervention programs—such as pull-out reading sessions and differentiated numeracy activities—achieved up to a 25% reduction in the number of non-readers within one school year. The authors emphasized that these gains were most prominent in schools where principals actively monitored lesson implementation, facilitated regular teacher reflection sessions, and ensured that instructional resources were aligned with learners' specific needs.

Furthermore, Cruz and Bautista (2024) explored the relationship between instructional leadership and technology integration in rural and semi-urban schools. Their findings indicated that school heads who championed blended learning strategies, provided targeted ICT training for teachers, and incorporated technology-supported formative assessments observed notable improvements in both student engagement and performance. The study highlighted that effective instructional leaders did not merely

supply digital tools but also guided teachers in embedding these tools into lesson design, making learning more interactive and accessible, especially for learners with limited exposure to technology at home.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to explore the impact of school heads' instructional leadership on teaching quality and student learning outcomes in the Schools Division of the City of Batac.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the instructional leadership practices employed by school heads to improve teaching quality and student learning outcomes?

2. What are the challenges encountered by the school heads in implementing instructional leadership practices, and what support or resources are needed to enhance their effectiveness**?**

Research methodology

This chapter presented the research design, the locale of the study, population, and sampling, data presentation instrument, data gathering procedure, research methodology, ethical consideration, and data presentation and analysis.

Research design

This study employed a phenomenological research design. Specifically, this study adopted a descriptive phenomenology that focuses on understanding lived experiences and contextual nuances. This approach allows an in-depth exploration on the impact of school heads' instructional leadership on teaching quality and student learning outcomes. It used an open-ended question embedded in an online interview questionnaire for school heads. This approach allows the researcher to collect a rich narrative data that can provide deeper insights into leadership practices and challenges.

Locale of the study

The study will be carried out in selected elementary schools within the Schools Division of the City of Batac. The chosen schools will represent varied contexts, such as urban, and rural areas, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of how instructional leadership operates in diverse environments. These settings are selected intentionally to capture differences in resources, community engagement, and organizational structures, which may influence the effectiveness of leadership practices.

Population and sampling

The population of this study will consist of school heads from the selected elementary schools. The respondents will be chosen using purposive sampling to ensure that participants have direct involvement in instructional leadership processes. The sample will include ten (10) school heads, representing different school types and sizes, as well as fifty to one hundred teachers, who will provide varied perspectives on teaching quality and student learning outcomes. This composition aims to reflect the voices of both leaders and practitioners, ensuring a balanced understanding of the impact of leadership.

Data gathering instrument

The main instrument for data collection was an open-ended online questionnaire divided into two main sections: an open-ended question on instructional leadership practices and challenges they encounter. The instrument will be developed using Google Forms to ensure accessibility and ease of response.

Data gathering procedure

The data was collected through the online interview questionnaires in Google Forms. Each form will include a section for informed consent, requiring participants to acknowledge their voluntary participation before proceeding to answer the questions.

The link to the school heads questionnaire were distributed through official communication channels, such as school email groups or Messenger group chats. Participants will be given a specific time frame, typically two weeks, to complete their responses. After the submission period, the researcher will download the collected data from Google Forms, with quantitative responses compiled in spreadsheet format for analysis, and qualitative responses organized for thematic interpretation.

Ethical considerations

The study upheld strict ethical standards to protect the rights and privacy of all participants. Participation will be entirely voluntary, and respondents will have the right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Informed consent will be obtained electronically through the first section of the online form, which will explain the purpose, scope, and procedures of the study. All responses will remain confidential and anonymous; personal identifiers will not be included in the reporting of results. Data will be stored securely in password-protected files and will be used solely for academic purposes. The researcher will respect the time, perspectives, and professional responsibilities of all participants throughout the research process.

Results and discussion

This part presented findings from the online interview questionnaire with the 10 respondents (10 school heads) from the elementary schools of Schools Division of the City of Batac. The data is organized according to key themes identified.

Table 1. Summary: Instructional leadership best practices and challenges encountered by school heads in teaching quality and learning outcomes.

Theme 1: Instructional leadership best practices of school heads	**Participant**
Classroom observations and feedback	P1, P4, P7
Teacher collaboration and lesson planning	P2, P6
Data-driven instruction	P3
Providing resources and support	P5, P9
Teacher capacity building and innovation	P8
Distributed leadership and empowerment	P10

Theme 2: Challenges encountered by school heads	
Classroom observations and feedback	P1, P4
Data-driven interventions	P7
Time constraints and workload	P3, P5
Limited training in coaching and leadership practices	P4
Resource and infrastructure limitations	P6
Teacher buy-in and change management	P10
Monitoring and follow-up	P8, P9

Note. Data were gathered from open-ended online questionnaire responses from ten school heads of the elementary schools of the Schools Division of the City of Batac.

Theme 1: Instructional leadership best practices of school heads

Instructional leadership plays a critical role in shaping the quality of teaching and learning within schools. Effective school heads who demonstrate strong instructional leadership foster a culture of continuous improvement, professional collaboration, and data-driven decision-making. Through focusing on teaching and learning as core priorities, these leaders implement best practices that enhance instructional quality, support teacher development, and ultimately improve student outcomes. This presentation outlines key best practices in instructional leadership that have proven effective in driving educational success.

Classroom observations and feedback

One of the most effective instructional leadership practices is conducting regular classroom observations followed by constructive feedback. When school heads actively engage in observing teaching, they gain valuable insights into instructional strengths and areas for improvement. Timely, specific, and supportive feedback helps teachers reflect on their practices, refine their strategies, and align instruction with curriculum standards. This ongoing dialogue fosters a culture of professional growth and accountability, ultimately leading to improved teaching quality and better student outcomes.

"As school head, I believe that regular classroom visits are not just about monitoring but about showing teachers that we care about their growth. I gave feedback to them to improve their performance and improve the quality of the teaching-learning process they possess inside their classroom." (P1)

"I make it a point to observe classes, then give feedback right away, highlighting what's good before suggesting areas to improve." (P4)

"Teachers tell us they feel more supported when feedback is respectful and constructive. Over time, this practice has made teaching stronger and has been reflected in students becoming more active and engaged in class." (P7)

This is consistent with Sun, Cheng, and Walker (2024), who found that instructional leadership practices such as feedback and monitoring mediate teacher performance, ultimately raising student achievement.

The respondents' experiences affirm that timely observation and coaching are not merely evaluative but developmental, creating a culture of growth and accountability.

Teacher collaboration and lesson planning

Effective school leaders promote a collaborative culture by encouraging teachers to work together in planning lessons, sharing strategies, and analyzing student work. By facilitating structured time for team planning and professional dialogue, school heads help ensure consistency in instructional delivery and alignment with learning goals. This collaborative approach not only enhances the quality of lesson planning but also fosters a sense of shared responsibility for student achievement and professional growth.

"I always encourage teachers to collaborate, especially during our LAC sessions, where they share strategies and even troubleshoot challenges together. I also make it a point to model some practices myself so that teachers see I'm also involved in the teaching process. This has created a culture where teachers feel inspired to try new approaches in class. The result is more engaging lessons and students who are more eager to learn." (P2 and P6)

This echoes the findings of Lee and Hallinger (2023), who emphasized that principal leadership positively influences learning outcomes when it fosters collective teacher engagement. The respondents' insights show that collaboration is not only about sharing ideas but also about strengthening teachers' confidence to innovate in their classrooms.

Data-driven instruction

School leaders who prioritize data-driven instruction use student performance data to inform teaching practices and guide decision-making. By regularly analyzing assessment results, classroom trends, and learning gaps, they support teachers in tailoring instruction to meet diverse student needs. Effective leaders create a culture where data is used not for judgment, but as a tool for continuous improvement. They facilitate professional development and collaborative data reviews, helping educators adjust strategies to boost learning outcomes and close achievement gaps.

"One of the things I rely on is student assessment data. When I see where the learners are struggling, I sit down with the teachers and design interventions that match those gaps. This way, our actions are specific and not just general solutions. I've noticed that when interventions are data-based, students show real improvement in their performance." (P3)

Alam, Salfi, and Khan (2025) similarly underscored the value of instructional leadership in curriculum reform, particularly in using evidence-based strategies. This aligns with the respondent's practice, highlighting that effective use of data strengthens decision-making and ensures targeted support for learners.

Providing resources and support

An essential role of instructional leaders is ensuring that teachers have the necessary resources and support to deliver high-quality instruction. This includes providing access to up-to-date teaching materials, technology, professional development opportunities, and instructional coaching. Effective school heads also create an environment where teachers feel supported emotionally and professionally, addressing challenges and removing barriers to teaching and learning. Through equipping educators with the right tools and backing, school leaders empower them to focus on effective instruction and student success.

"As leaders, we see that teachers do their best when they have the right tools. That's why we always try to provide resources, whether it's teaching aids or technology. With these, teachers feel more confident and can try innovative strategies like differentiated learning. Students then respond better, participate more, and develop stronger competencies." (P5 & P9)

This finding resonates with Balangcod, Castillo, and De Vera's (2025) meta-synthesis, which revealed that school leadership competencies directly support learner-centered and personalized education. The alignment between research and the respondents' insights highlights that resource allocation is a crucial leadership function that sustains both teacher and learner development.

Teacher capacity building and innovation

"I believe that continuous learning for teachers is just as important as it is for students. That's why we invest in trainings, coaching, and even encourage the use of technology in their lessons. When teachers are confident with new skills, they become more creative and students enjoy their learning more. This has improved engagement in classrooms." (P8)

This is in line with Manalo, Ledesma, and Gabriel (2022), who documented how principals in the Philippines led schools during the pandemic by supporting teacher professional growth. Both the study and the respondent's experiences highlight that building teacher capacity is essential not just during crises but as a long-term strategy for improving instruction and learning outcomes.

Distributed (shared) leadership and empowerment

School leaders play a vital role in strengthening teacher capacity by promoting continuous professional growth and encouraging innovative teaching practices. Through targeted training, mentoring, and exposure to new instructional strategies, they help educators expand their skills and adapt to changing educational needs. By fostering a culture of innovation, school heads empower teachers to experiment with new methods, integrate technology, and implement creative solutions to enhance student engagement and learning. This commitment to capacity building ensures a dynamic, future-ready teaching workforce.

"I don't believe leadership should just rest on me. I empower teachers by letting them lead projects or committees, which builds their sense of ownership. When they feel trusted, they work harder and with

more passion. That kind of dedication shows in their classrooms, where students gain from motivated and resourceful teachers." (P10)

Gonzalez, Li, and Thomas (2025) similarly found that distributed leadership and parental involvement are key drivers of student achievement. The respondent's practice reflects this, showing that empowering teachers builds both professional confidence and positive impacts on learners.

Theme 2: Challenges of school heads encountered in the implementation of instructional leadership

While instructional leadership is essential for improving teaching and learning outcomes, school heads often face numerous challenges in its implementation. Balancing administrative responsibilities with instructional duties can limit the time and focus needed for effective leadership in the classroom. Inadequate resources, resistance to change, lack of professional development, and varying teacher competencies further complicate the process. Additionally, external pressures such as policy demands and community expectations can create additional strain. Understanding these challenges is crucial to developing strategies that support school leaders in fulfilling their instructional leadership roles effectively.

Classroom observations and feedback

One common challenge school head face in conducting classroom observations and providing feedback is the lack of time due to competing administrative duties. With numerous responsibilities outside of instruction, it becomes difficult to consistently observe classrooms and offer timely, meaningful feedback. Additionally, some teachers may view observations as evaluative rather than supportive, leading to resistance or discomfort. Without proper training in giving constructive feedback, school heads may also struggle to guide teachers effectively toward improvement.

"One head shared that "we try to provide immediate feedback after walkthroughs, but sometimes the process feels rushed and teachers don't always internalize what needs to be improved." (P1)
"Another noted that teachers occasionally view observations as "compliance" rather than developmental support, which hinders open dialogue." (P4)

These experiences reflect the challenge of shifting classroom observations from evaluative tasks to authentic coaching opportunities. Sun, Cheng, and Walker (2024) found that structured and supportive post-observation conferences are critical in improving teacher instructional practice, as they foster trust and clarity of expectations. Similarly, Taylor and Tyler (2021) reported that frequent, constructive feedback cycles significantly improve student achievement when teachers are supported in making incremental instructional adjustments. Thus, while heads recognize the importance of observations, the studies suggest that training in evidence-based coaching and dedicated time for structured feedback would strengthen the developmental nature of these practices.

Data-driven interventions

Implementing data-driven interventions can be challenging for school heads due to limited access to reliable data systems and insufficient training in data analysis. Many school leaders and teachers may

struggle to interpret assessment data effectively or link it to specific instructional strategies. Additionally, time constraints and a lack of collaborative structures can hinder regular data discussions and follow-up actions. Without a clear process for using data to inform instruction, interventions may be inconsistent or fail to address students' actual learning needs.

Several school heads acknowledged that while they collect assessment data regularly, transforming results into targeted interventions remains a challenge. One remarked,

"I sit down with teachers, and we design interventions, but at times our actions still feel general, not fully addressing the gaps we see in the scores." Another admitted that interpreting item-level results "requires skills we haven't fully mastered." (P7)

This aligns with recent findings that data literacy among school leaders is a decisive factor in ensuring that assessments lead to meaningful instructional changes. Schildkamp et al. (2019) highlight that without explicit professional development, school leaders often lack the expertise to guide teachers in data use effectively. Similarly, Poortman and Schildkamp (2021) emphasize that collaborative data inquiry cycles where leaders and teachers jointly interpret and act on data are more effective than isolated analysis. This suggests that school heads would benefit from training in data literacy and structured data-review processes, which could turn raw scores into precise interventions that directly impact student learning.

Time constraints and workload

School heads often face significant time constraints and heavy workloads, balancing administrative duties, staff management, community engagement, and instructional leadership. This demanding schedule limits the time available for classroom observations, teacher support, and strategic planning. As a result, critical instructional leadership tasks may be delayed or overlooked, making it difficult to maintain a consistent focus on improving teaching and learning outcomes.

A recurring theme among the heads was the lack of time to focus on instructional leadership due to overwhelming administrative responsibilities. One head lamented,

"I spend more time on paperwork and reports than in classrooms," (P3) while another added,

"Sometimes a whole week passes without me being able to observe a single class." (P5)

This tension between managerial and instructional duties is well-documented in the literature. Grissom, Egalite, and Lindsay (2021) found that principals spend less than 20% of their time on instructional leadership, yet this is the domain most strongly correlated with student achievement. Similarly, Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2020) reported that schools where leaders have structured time for instructional work see higher teacher performance gains. The alignment between the heads lived experiences and research evidence underscores the need for systemic solutions, such as delegating non-instructional tasks to administrative staff or carving out protected time for classroom-focused leadership.

Limited training in coaching and leadership practices

Many school heads encounter difficulties in effectively implementing instructional leadership due to insufficient training in coaching and leadership skills. Without proper professional development, they may lack the confidence and strategies needed to support teachers' growth, provide meaningful feedback, and foster a collaborative learning environment. This gap can hinder their ability to lead instructional improvements and drive positive teaching and learning outcomes.

Several school heads expressed feeling underprepared for the nuances of coaching teachers. A head described,

"I can observe and point out what's missing but turning that into real coaching for improvement is harder than it looks. Leadership training programs often focus on management and compliance rather than sustained instructional leadership." (P4)

This resonates with Leithwood et al. (2020), who argue that leadership development programs must be ongoing, job-embedded, and focused on instructional improvement rather than one-off workshops. Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) further emphasize the role of professional learning communities and peer mentoring in building principals' capacity to engage in authentic instructional leadership. The implication is clear: school heads require sustained, practice-based training in coaching and instructional support, rather than episodic seminars.

Resource and infrastructure limitations

School heads often struggle with limited resources and inadequate infrastructure, which can impede the effective implementation of instructional leadership. A lack of teaching materials, technology, and suitable learning environments restricts teachers' ability to deliver quality instruction. These limitations also affect professional development opportunities and data management systems, making it harder for leaders to support and monitor teaching and learning effectively.

Heads also pointed to resource constraints as a barrier.

"Even if I want teachers to use differentiated strategies, sometimes we simply don't have the materials, lack of ICT tools makes it difficult to sustain certain innovations." (P6)

Studies confirm that resource availability influences the scope of instructional leadership. The Wallace Foundation (2021) highlighted that principals' effectiveness is strengthened when adequate instructional materials and support structures are in place. Meanwhile, Berman et al. (2023) noted that in resource-constrained contexts, principals must balance creativity in resource mobilization with advocacy for systemic support. The accounts of the heads therefore mirror broader findings: instructional leadership cannot thrive in isolation from material and infrastructural realities.

Teacher buy-in and change management

Gaining teacher buy-in is often a significant challenge for school heads when implementing instructional leadership initiatives. Resistance to change, fear of increased accountability, or skepticism about new strategies can hinder collaboration and slow progress. Effective change management requires building trust, clear communication, and involving teachers in decision-making to foster a shared commitment to instructional improvement.

Resistance from teachers also emerged as a challenge. One head admitted,

"Some teachers see new practices as just another requirement and when gains are slow, morale drops, and teachers lose interest." (P10)

Research underscores that teacher engagement is crucial for sustaining instructional initiatives. Hallinger and Heck (2020) reported that leadership practices emphasizing collaboration and shared decision-making significantly increase teacher commitment and willingness to innovate. Likewise, Hargreaves and Fullan (2021) highlight that cultivating professional trust and recognizing teachers' contributions enhance buy-in and reduce resistance. This suggests that heads can address resistance not only by mandating practices but by involving teachers in planning and celebrating incremental successes.

Monitoring and follow-up

School heads often face challenges in consistently monitoring instructional practices and conducting timely follow-up due to time constraints and competing priorities. Without regular monitoring, it becomes difficult to track progress, address ongoing issues, and ensure that feedback leads to meaningful improvements. Inadequate follow-up can result in fragmented support and missed opportunities to sustain teacher growth and enhance student learning.

Finally, school heads noted difficulties in sustaining monitoring and evaluation of instructional interventions.

"We can start a program, but tracking whether it works is another story," one explained. *(P8)* Another said, *"Without data on progress, it's hard to know what to continue or adjust." (P9)*

Research affirms the importance of systematic monitoring in sustaining instructional leadership. Supovitz et al. (2019) emphasize that school leaders who use ongoing formative monitoring are better able to adapt initiatives in real time. Similarly, Robinson (2020) found that feedback loops—where leaders collect, analyze, and act on monitoring data—strengthen both teacher accountability and professional growth. The challenge voiced by heads thus reflects a broader need for simple, user-friendly monitoring tools and capacity building in rapid-cycle evaluation.

Conclusion

This study showed that the way school heads practice instructional leadership has a direct and lasting impact on both teaching quality and student learning. When school heads take time to observe classes,

give constructive feedback, encourage collaboration, use data in decision-making, provide resources, and build teachers' capacities, they create an environment where both teachers and students thrive. These practices mark a move away from the old model of supervision toward a more developmental form of leadership—one that nurtures growth, accountability, and innovation. Most importantly, when school heads interact with teachers in respectful and supportive ways, they help build trust and a culture of continuous professional learning.

At the same time, this study did not overlook the challenges school heads face. Administrative tasks often take up too much of their time, leaving little room for classroom engagement. Limited training in coaching and mentoring, lack of resources, teacher resistance, and the view of classroom observations as compliance rather than growth opportunities all make instructional leadership harder to sustain. These realities highlight the difficult balance school leaders must maintain between managing schools and leading instruction.

The findings also echoed what earlier studies have long established: that structured feedback, collaborative use of data, and shared leadership improve teaching and learning, while lack of time, resources, and leadership preparation undermine these gains. This close alignment between research and practice validates the insights of the respondents while pointing to systemic gaps that still need urgent attention.

Moving forward, instructional leadership can only flourish if school heads are given the right training, resources, and institutional backing. Professional development should go beyond compliance and instead focus on coaching, data use, and leading change. Equally important, school systems must ease the administrative load of leaders so they can spend more time observing classes, mentoring teachers, and driving instructional improvement. These shifts will help ensure that instructional leadership is not just practiced, but meaningfully sustained.

In the end, this study underscores that instructional leadership is both relational and systemic. It succeeds not only when leaders provide direction and resources but also when they empower teachers, foster collaboration, and build structures for continuous growth. Addressing the challenges requires a holistic effort—developing leadership skills, ensuring adequate resources, and cultivating a culture of trust and shared responsibility. By closing the gap between best practices and real-world constraints, schools can strengthen their leadership systems and, in doing so, uplift the quality of teaching and learning in lasting and meaningful ways.

While this research sheds light on how school heads in Batac practice instructional leadership, its scope was limited to a small sample and relied on self-reported experiences, which may not capture the full picture. Future studies should involve more diverse participants, use mixed methods, and directly measure student performance to deepen the understanding of how leadership practices shape learning outcomes.

References

Battad, L. (2024). Instructional leadership practices and teacher self-efficacy in the Castillejos District, Zambales. *Philippine Educational Research Journal, 18*(3), 45–62.

Bernardo, A. (2021). Instructional leadership in the time of remote learning: Adaptations of school heads in the Philippines. *Philippine Social Science Journal, 4*(3), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.52006/main.v4i3.388

Congress of the Philippines. (2001). *Republic Act No. 9155: Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001*. https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2001/08/11/republic-act-no-9155.

Corpuz, B. (2020). Instructional leadership and student achievement in Philippine public schools. *Philippine Journal of Education, 95*(1), 55–68.

Dela Cruz, A., & Magsino, R. (2022). Classroom supervision and teacher development: The role of instructional leadership in the Philippine public schools. *International Journal of Research in Teacher Education, 13*(1), 35–39.

Dela Cruz, J., Reyes, M., & Santos, L. (2022). Instructional leadership and school performance in Philippine public schools. *Philippine Journal of Education, 95*(2), 45–62.

Department of Education Philippines. (2021). *Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) manual.*

Del Rosario, R., & Sarmiento, C. (2021). Leadership challenges in implementing K to 12 reforms in the Philippines. *International Journal of Educational Policy and Leadership, 16*(8), 1–14.

Garcia, R., & Cruz, E. (2020). The role of school heads in enhancing teacher performance. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 8*(1), 112–120.

Garcia, R., & Cruz, J. (2020). Strengthening instructional leadership for school improvement. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 8*(3), 14–22.

Gumus, S., Bellibas, M. S., Esen, M., & Gumus, E. (2018). A systematic review of studies investigating the mediating effect of instructional leadership on student achievement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 46*(1), 25–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143216659296

Hallinger, P. (2018). Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 46*(1), 5–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143216670652

Hallinger, P. (2018). Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 46*(2), 125–142.

Hallinger, P., & Wang, W. C. (2020). Assessing instructional leadership with the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 66,* 100890. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2020.100890

Kraft, M. A., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2018). The effect of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of the causal evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 88*(4), 547–588.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management, 40*(1), 5–22.

Liu, S., & Hallinger, P. (2018). Principal instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher professional learning in China: Testing a mediated-effects model. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 54*(4), 501–528. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X18769048

Lopez, A. (2022). Instructional leadership practices and student outcomes in Batac. *Ilocos Education Review, 14*(2), 21–38.

Malabanan, J. (2022). School leadership practices and student performance in the Philippines. *Southeast Asian Journal of Education, 13*(2), 78–92.

Morales, D. (2025). Instructional leadership practices of elementary school heads in the Division of Albay. *Philippine Journal of Educational Leadership, 8*(1), 55–72.

Ng, D., Nguyen, D., Wong, K., & Choy, W. (2020). How school leaders support teacher learning in Singapore. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 29,* 100–115.

Nguyen, D., Ng, D., & Le, T. (2021). Instructional leadership in Southeast Asia: A review of empirical studies. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 49*(4), 621–640. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220918256

Reyes, V., & Delos Santos, J. (2023). School leadership and educational equity: Evidence from Philippine public schools. *International Journal of Educational Development, 98,* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102678

Santos, M. (2019). Instructional leadership in Philippine schools: Trends and challenges. *Philippine Education Studies, 7*(1), 33–50.

Santos, M. (2019). Instructional leadership practices of school principals in Philippine public schools. *Philippine Journal of Education, 96*(1), 33–49.

Supovitz, J., Sirinides, P., & May, H. (2019). How principals and peers influence teaching and learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 55*(2), 311–346. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X18785871

World Bank. (2022). *Ending learning poverty: What will it take?* https://worldbank.org/en/topic/education/publication/ending-learning-poverty-what-will-it-take

Publisher's Note: DWIJMH stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

© 2025 by the authors. Licensee DWIJMH. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

Divine Word International Journal of Management and Humanities. DWIJMH is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.